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THE PLACE OF THE ENGLISH PROGRAM IN ADULT EDUCATION.

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A PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION MUST RECOGNIZE LEARNING AS ESSENTIAL FOR SURVIVAL AND CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE ADULT STUDENT, THE TEACHER'S SKILLS AND ABILITIES, AND THE SPECIFIC SUBJECT TO BE TAUGHT. THE ENGLISH TEACHER OF ADULTS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL IS PLAGUED BY A LACK OF APPROPRIATE MATERIALS AND AN UNAVAILABILITY OF LIBRARY FACILITIES, AND MUST RELY LARGELY UPON HIS OWN RESOURCES IN DESIGNING A COURSE OF STUDY. HE SHOULD GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO A COMMUNICATIONS-CENTERED PROGRAM OF READING, WRITING, LISTENING, AND SPEAKING IN WHICH (1) READING IS CONSIDERED BASIC TO ADULTS' WEAKNESSES IN LEARNING OTHER COMMUNICATION SKILLS, (2) BASIC SKILLS ARE EMPHASIZED IN AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF GRAMMAR, COMPOSITION, LITERATURE, AND SPEECH, (3) EXTENSIVE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM PROCEDURE IS ENCOURAGED, AND (4) SMALL INSTRUCTIONAL UNITS ARE USED WITH A VARIETY OF TEACHING TECHNIQUES. TO HELP TEACHERS MEET STUDENTS' NEEDS, A SURVEY TO DETERMINE HOW ENGLISH IS CURRENTLY BEING TAUGHT TO ADULTS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED, ENGLISH INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS SHOULD BE PREPARED, AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONSIDER ADULT COURSES PART OF THE TOTAL ENGLISH PROGRAM, PROVIDING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS, CLASSROOMS, AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING TO TEACHERS OF ADULT EVENING CLASSES. (THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE "ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN," VOLUME 55, NUMBER 1, OCTOBER 1967.) (RD)

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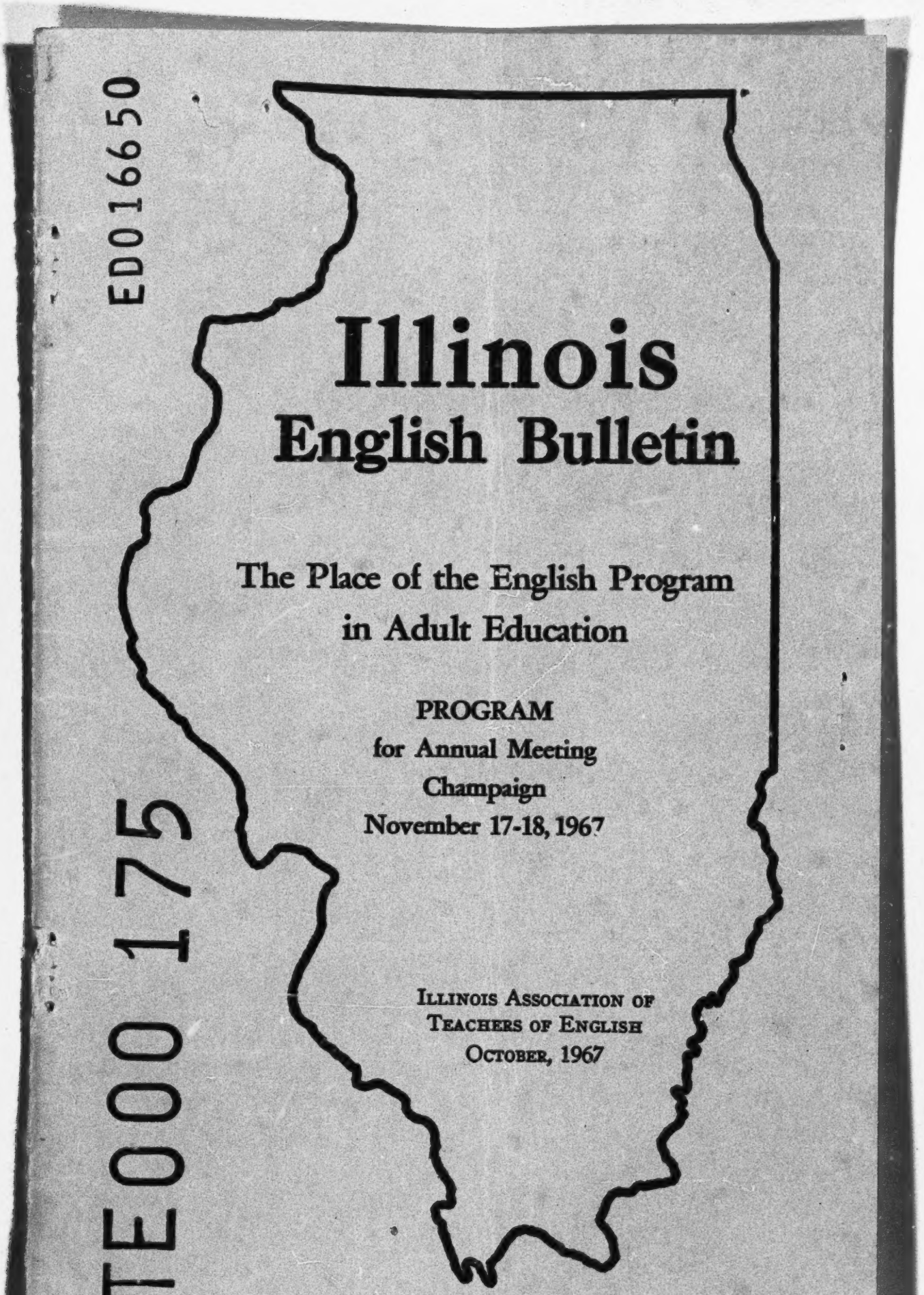

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The Place of the English Program in Adult Education

BY BARBARA L. SLOAN

I.

In 1937 Mr. H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N burst upon the fiction scene in the United States and revealed to many people a vast area of education they hadn't known existed. Mr. Kaplan and his immigrant colleagues were all members of a metropolitan "night school," in which they were learning the English language and American history all rolled up into something called "Americanization."

The field of adult education actually extends back to the turn of the century in this country, but in the past it has often struggled along unnoticed and unappreciated, except by those who needed it. In very recent years we have begun to look at this fourth level of education with new eyes and new respect. Therefore, it would seem in order to trace briefly the past history, present realization, and future hopes of this vital aspect of education and to examine the role of the English program in adult education.

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Exactly what do we mean by "adult education" and how would we limit it? Robert Peers in a comparative study of English and American adult education defined it in this way: "In the United States . . . adult education means simply the education of adults through part-time studies of any kind — technical, professional, and liberal — and within these fields, theoretical or practical or both."[1] Within its past history there has been a great variety of aims, organization, and content. As indicated above, the earliest adult education programs were taught primarily to the foreign-born who wished to be assimilated rapidly into the American culture. Also in the forefront of the adult education movement were labor organizations whose educational programs were patterned largely after the successful Workers' Educational Association in England.

As the wave of immigrants receded and labor conditions improved, the emphasis changed in many areas until adult education to many people meant education for leisure time or cultural education for the already well-educated; so all over America white collar workers and housewives met over the potter's wheel or the drawing board. Such trends seemed to indicate that there was no longer a need for learning in the general education field. However, testing done on men entering military service in World War II revealed the fallacy in this thinking and, as a result, the military branches established educational projects which comprised the most comprehensive work in adult education in the entire country at that time.

The postwar years and the impact of technological and scientific advances have heightened the American public's awareness of the need for a well-educated citizenry. We might take 1950 as the dividing line in our concepts of the role of adult education. The president of the National Association of Public School Adult Educators used such a division when he stated: "In the first half of this century, the public school's greatest responsibility was the education of children and youth. The second fifty years may well emerge as a time during which the public schools realize that their responsibility must, of necessity, extend to the education of all citizens."[2] The twentieth century prophet Marshall McLuhan has also alerted us to the new approach in education. "The main 'work'

[1] Robert Peers, *Adult Education: A Comparative Study* (New York, 1958), p. 268.

[2] Robert H. Coates, "Preparing Adults for Rapid Change," *NEA Journal*, December, 1966, p. 25.

of the future will be education . . . people will not so much earn a living as learn a living."[3]

Since 1950 we Americans have become increasingly and uncomfortably aware that our public schools are *not* educating all the people as we had naively and blissfully assumed. With the country enjoying unparalleled affluence it is disconcerting to discover that eleven million adults haven't finished the eighth grade. Coupled with this figure is the evidence that a low level of education is characteristic of parents receiving welfare payments under Aid to Dependent Children programs. When we are informed that by 1975 only 4% of the labor force will consist of unskilled workers, we begin to realize fully the enormity of the retraining and basic education programs needed to solve one of the country's most pressing problems.

Fortunately, there is a positive side. Much critical analysis and research are being focused in this direction. The 1960 census figures showed four million adults involved in formal classes or other educational activities in public schools. The federal government has jumped into the battle with funds to enable the schools to expand currently existing programs to meet the newly-recognized problems. The Social Security Amendment of 1962, the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, the Vocational Education Act of 1963, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 have contributed and will continue to contribute to adult education programs.

Much of the emphasis has been directed toward the poor and illiterate. One fact which became apparent as the U.S. Department of Labor began to carry out retraining programs under MDTA was that many of the trainees were functional illiterates; consequently, basic education classes for adults have been expanded or introduced in many cities.[4] On a slightly higher level of education the number of untrained high school dropouts has risen at such an alarming rate that it is necessary to provide a place for them to continue their education.

Until 1966 most of the federal attention was aimed at improving public school programs up to the adult level. In February of that year Sen. Vance Hartke proposed a bill for federal support

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[3] Marshall McLuhan and George B. Leonard, "The Future of Education: The Class of 1989," *Look*, February 21, 1967, p. 25.

[4] Nathaniel J. Pallone, *No Longer Superfluous* (South Bend, 1965) is a study of such a training program conducted in South Bend, Indiana, to teach basic language and mathematics skills.

for adult education through the secondary level. Some of the outstanding features of the bill were the allocation of funds for training teachers and the distribution of funds through the school systems. Unfortunately, this bill never came out of committee; however, the Elementary-Secondary Amendments of 1966 established the Adult Education Act under the jurisdiction of the Office of Education. Funds were to be allotted to the states on a proportionate basis according to the number of adults who have not completed more than five years of formal schooling. The purpose of the act is to encourage and expand basic education programs.[5] This does not directly help the secondary level, of course, but it does indicate the increased attention being given in Washington to the needs of adults in the field of education.

So the future in adult education looks bright, but the job is an enormous one. This study will be restricted to the secondary level of education as provided for adults through the public schools, and more specifically I will be concerned with the English teacher and his department's responsibility to these new students. However, from within this narrow view we must not forget the much wider framework as expressed by the President of Eastern Michigan University to a state group of adult educators: "The first work of our time is the development of the human resource at all levels and at all places."[6]

II.

The undertaking and fulfillment of such a task as Dr. Sponberg presented should be based upon clearly defined goals. But it will not do to borrow a philosophy and set of goals from the regular high school and apply them to the adult students. We are dealing with a special area of education with special students and special problems; so before attempting to describe goals, let us examine in some detail the features of adult education which differentiate it from the day school.

Four of the major problems currently facing the adult education administrator are the unavailability of proper materials, the status of the program, the training of teachers, and the fulfillment of the students' needs.

Some of the problems will be dealt with in more depth in following sections. For example, there has been great interest by

[5] The information regarding this act is from "A Schoolman's Guide to Federal Aid," *School Management*, December, 1966, pp. 90-91.

[6] Harold E. Sponberg, "The First Work of These Times," *Adult Leadership*, December, 1966, p. 208.

publishers in producing varied and useful materials for adult basic education classes. However, the secondary level is relatively untouched; therefore when I outline a course of study I will attempt to suggest how currently available materials can be adapted for use in adult classes.

The problem of the status of the program no doubt varies in different locations. Often the adult education administrator is a person trained in another area who has been handed the adult education position merely to fill out his contracted time. Greater emphasis is being placed in the adult education professional organizations on the improvement of training for the adult educator. One recent article in the *Adult Leadership* magazine was entitled "Have You Thought About A Future in Adult Education?" The author cited the need for persons to prepare themselves exclusively for adult education programs and the need for colleges to provide such programs of training.[1]

Many adult teachers do not even know of the existence of their own professional organizations. The American Association of Adult Education was founded in 1925 and later replaced by the American Education Association, which was formed in 1951. The new association includes as affiliates the Council of National Organizations for Adult Education and the National Association of Public School Adult Educators. *Adult Education* and *Adult Leadership* are periodicals published by the AEA, and NAPSAE also publishes many helpful bulletins dealing with problems of adult education and suggesting methods for dealing with them. Among these publications are the regular pamphlets, *Techniques* for teachers and *Swap Shop* for administrators, in addition to many booklets dealing with special aspects of adult learning, such as improving reading and study habits. Sad to relate, many adult education teachers know of these publications only if an administrator happens to pass on a stray copy.

We can see that raising the status of the program overlaps into the problem of obtaining properly trained teachers. The May 1962 bulletin of *Techniques* stated that there were 100,000 teachers of adults in public school. A large number of these teachers are "moonlighting" after a full day in the classroom. Many are housewives or retired teachers. Although a teaching certificate is required for these teachers in most states, it is probably not unfair to say that the majority of the teachers regard teaching adults as a part-time job. And yet probably in no other branch of teaching

[1] John F. Meggers, "Have You Thought About A Future in Adult Education?" *Adult Leadership*, December, 1966, p. 201.

does the responsibility rest so squarely on the shoulders of the teacher. In adult education the incentives are interest and the sense of achievement, two factors which are largely determined by the strength or weakness of the teacher.

Many of the characteristics of a good adult teacher should be found in any teacher, but I would like to ask that we keep one vital fact before us. That is, that the young student whose teacher fails to interest or inspire him is compelled to remain in class, at least for a time. The adult student whose teacher bores, belittles, or bothers him can and will quit. This means that the teacher's attitude is of the utmost importance. The list of attributes which Robert Peers draws up for the adult teacher could scarcely be improved upon. It includes breadth and depth of learning, a full and ready mind, a belief in adult education, and an awareness of the special problems of the adult.[8]

This brings us to the vital and basic problem of adult education, fulfilling the needs of the students. Only after those needs have been examined will it be possible to outline goals for a program. The attitudes toward adult learners have tended to go from one extreme to the other. On the one hand I heard the opinion expressed when I was teaching adults that "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," and on the other hand I observed colleagues using the old bag of tricks from the adolescents' classroom to teach the new adult students.

Adults *are* different from young people, but they *can* learn. E. L. Thorndike's tests in the 20's led him to the conclusion that inner growth favors adults in competition with children. Adult teachers often enumerate among the joys of teaching older students the fact that discipline is no problem. The adult brings experience and motivation to class with him. He may also bring a sense of failure from past academic experiences. In a practical handbook for adult students published by NAPSAE, the two roadblocks to adult learning are listed as a negative feeling about one's self and a strong resistance to change.[9] Psychological studies done on adult learning experiences indicate that changes in the primary ability to learn are affected less by age changes than by processes of perception, attention, motivation, set, and physiological condition.[10]

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[8] Peers, pp. 208-209.

[9] Virginia B. Warren, *How Adults Can Learn More — Faster* (Washington, 1961), p. 12.

[10] James E. Birren, "Adult Capacities to Learn," *Psychological Backgrounds of Adult Education,* ed. Raymond G. Kuhlen (Chicago, 1963), pp. 8-42.

So the adult teacher is faced with eager students who have much to contribute as a result of the living experiences they have encountered, but who have lost confidence in their ability to study and learn. For many, school has only unpleasant memories and, not infrequently, the English class was a major stumbling block on the road to the high school diploma. Therefore, it is imperative that the teacher of adults be aware of his students' differences and their needs.

Adults do not want an authoritarian figure. They consider themselves equals with the teacher, in age and experience, if not in learning. They demand that a teacher be fair and impartial. They consider flexibility a major virtue. Although it should be the teacher's responsibility to decide course content and the units of instruction, the students will want to feel involved in the class planning. These are not adolescents who are used to having decisions made for them, but adults who daily must make many trivial and some momentous decisions. In the classroom they can certainly be given the responsibility for helping to decide how much time should be spent on each unit, which of several units would be most useful to the class, and how the emphasis should be placed on certain aspects of instruction within a unit.

Perhaps the most important characteristic for a teacher of adults is friendliness. He must be genuinely interested in and involved with the members of his class. Formality should be avoided. The teacher is a friend and guide, as well as leader. A good climate for learning is essential. Success is the keynote for adult learners. Seldom will they complain if they consider the teacher unfriendly or antagonistic; they will just quit.

The students will come from all cultural and economic levels. There will probably be a wide range in the educational backgrounds. The motives for attending are diverse, as are the ability levels and learning capacities. The teacher must be sensitive to these differences. "The teacher of adults is neither schoolmaster nor schoolmarm. He is the captain of a voluntary team going out upon an intellectual exploring expedition."[11]

III.

Perhaps the time has come to state clearly the philosophy of adult education. The educator of adults believes that learning is inseparable from living; in fact, that it is essential for survival.

[11] Horace M. Kallen, *Philosophical Issues in Adult Education* (Springfield, Ill., 1962), p. 18.

The adult educator also believes a program of adult education must consider the nature of the adult student, the skills and abilities of the teacher, and the specific subject area to be taught.

The stated philosophy of the Workers' Educational Association in England applies equally well on this side of the Atlantic. It said that education sought "to help men and women to work out for themselves an effective attitude to life based on wider knowledge, to find their place in the universe, to discover a philosophy which will enable them to face up to life's problems individually and collectively."[12] However, just as many day schools exist quite happily without a written philosophy, as do the majority of night schools which never formulate a statement of belief. One which has, produced a creed which could well be the basis upon which any adult education program might be built. Amherst High School in Snyder, New York, operates on this philosophy:

> We believe . . . THAT . . . Adult Education should become a continuing experience, democratically conceived and administered, available to *all* adults, helping them to grow as individuals and as group members in a democratic society.
>
> Adult Education means participation in activities adapted to interests, needs, and capacities; in a program alive to the pulse of the community —a program that extends itself into the lives of people wherever they are and by whatever means are effective.[13]

Once a general philosophy has been arrived at, it is necessary to proceed to specific goals. Here it seems wise to determine what the students believe their particular needs are and then outline the goals of an English program to meet those needs. Several studies have been done with adult groups to explore the reasons why they come to adult education classes. A study made by Alvin Zander, director of the Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, revealed that more than two-thirds of the public school adult education students came to class for some other reason than course content. Most adult students were shown to have three needs. They need to find some sense of personal worth, to discover ways of being usefully influential, and to truly participate in the activities of the group.[14]

Another study contrasting two different adult groups in Indianapolis concluded that undereducated adults placed economic development as primary to educational need. The interest was ex-

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[12] Kallen, p. 10.

[13] *Urban Public School Adult Education Programs of the United States* (Washington, 1952), p. 97.

[14] "How to Avoid Drop-Outs," *Techniques*, February, 1961, p. 1.

tremely high in vocational training; that is, the study indicated the immediacy of practical learning for adults.[15]

Another survey, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, bore out the above conclusion. It was found that in the lower socio-economic class, education and learning are seen as things people are required to do. These people turn to adult education mainly to learn skills necessary to cope with needs of everyday life. There is little interest in knowledge for its own sake — only in terms of how useful it can be.[16] Granted that not all members of an adult education English class are from the lower socio-economic class, it is nevertheless true that the conditions under which most of them encountered secondary education the first time around led them to regard a high school diploma as a means to an end, not as an invitation to a fuller life.

So the objectives of the adult teacher could perhaps be outlined as they are in a very fine adult teachers' handbook published by the Office of the Illinois Superintendent of Public Instruction. Those objectives are to offer the adult opportunity to continue his education, to provide understanding of the adult student's responsibility as a citizen, to enable the adult to develop fundamental skills of comunication, to relate learnings to the student's everyday work, to develop a confidence in the adult student that he *can* learn, to furnish the learner with confidence from a successful learning experience, to give the student an opportunity to obtain the greatest amount of development possible in a small amount of time.[17]

The place of the English program in realizing such a list of objectives should be obvious. Most definitions of "English" or "language arts" in recent years have tended to cover the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In a supplement to the September, 1959, issue of the *English Journal,* these three reasons were given for studying English: its practical value, its civilizing value, and the love of it.[18] One vocational education plan which was structured for working boys in Jackson, Georgia, would appear to have followed those three reasons as a basic outline; for this course is divided into three theme units, "English and Your

[15] Ralph C. Dobbs, "Self-Perceived Educational Needs of Adults," *Adult Education,* Winter, 1966, p. 98.

[16] "Getting the Undereducated into Your Program," *Administrators' Swap Shop,* December, 1964, p. 4.

[17] John R. Berdrow, *Teaching Adults* (Springfield, Ill., 1965), p. 13.

[18] "The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English," *English Journal,* supplement, September, 1959, p. 1.

Job," "English and Your Responsibility as a Citizen," and "English and Your Leisure."[19]

When we think back to Zander's findings about the needs of adult students, what a remarkable correlation we discover. They need to discover ways of being usefully influential, to truly participate in the activities of the group, and to find some sense of personal worth. Occupation, citizenship, and leisure — these are the foundation stones for building our English program for adults.

As we build, we can keep before us a checklist of goals which should reinforce our consideration of the needs of our students. Such a checklist might ask such questions as those suggested by Hathaway:

1. Does it fit special needs of adults?
2. Does it teach a continuous process of lifelong learning?
3. Does it provide education to enable adults to live and function in a changing world?
4. Does it teach students to comprehend and express opinions on the basis of reason?
5. Does it provide ways for "living" experiences of adults to be recognized and credited?
6. Is the program broad enough to free the individual from a tunnel vision of strictly vocational orientation?[20]

IV.

Now our imaginary English teacher of adults faces his precisely defined philosophy and a clearly stated list of goals, and he wonders where to begin structuring his English course. Although much has been written recently concerning programs for the dropouts and disadvantaged, practically no attention has been directed toward specific subject areas, such as English, in adult secondary education. The National Council of Teachers of English has published one report of a task force examining the teaching of English to the disadvantaged.[21] Many of the general statements regarding materials, teaching approaches, and teacher training are applicable to the topic of adult education, but the section of the book dealing with adults is concerned only with basic education; therefore, the

[19] Jane Anne Settle, "English in Your Life: A Workable Course for Working Boys," *English Journal,* January, 1966, p. 73.

[20] William R. Hathaway, "Should Adult High School Diplomas Be Different?" *Adult Education,* Summer, 1965, p. 235.

[21] Richard Corbin and Muriel Crosby, *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged* (Champaign, Ill., 1965).

course content problems a secondary teacher would face are not touched on. The Barnes chapter does contain an excellent bibliography of materials available for adult students, and the secondary teacher might find this a helpful reference for finding materials for his weaker students.

Largely the English teacher will have to rely on his own study of his students, their needs, the area of English, and the writings in the field of adult education. We are assuming that this English teacher is already a teacher with some experience, that he is familiar with current publications dealing with language arts, that he is constantly seeking and evaluating new materials in the light of their usefulness to his special students. This may sound like an ideal, but these are necessary strengths which the adult teacher must possess because of his "alone" position. The teacher is not a loner because of a temperamental choice, but because of the reality of adult school organization. There is seldom much *esprit de corps* in a night school. Many fairly large systems never hold a teachers' meeting. Having only one or perhaps two classes in an evening, the adult teacher may never see anyone in the building except his pupils and, occasionally, the administrator.

The course of study may be the textbooks which he finds in his assigned classroom. He may never be requested to produce a lesson plan or any justification for anything he does in class. This is total freedom which can be terrifying to a teacher facing adult students for the first time. The positive side is that it is also total freedom to try *anything*, with the only restriction often being monetary. However, a well-informed, determined teacher can usually get around this limitation in ways which I will suggest later.

Seldom is there any attempt to track students, except in the largest systems. An adult teacher may even find himself teaching a combined eleventh and twelfth grade class. These examples demonstrate the difficulty of developing a sequential program, although there is usually an attempt made by the English teachers conferring together to avoid duplication of material, especially in the area of literature. It is true that in some schools there is a definite structure to be followed, but in the majority of situations the English teacher will find himself thrown back upon his own resources.

Probably the first decision he will face is to determine the central theory for his English program. Several adult school administrators have advocated a program emphasis differing from that of the day school. William R. Hathaway is one who has expressed in very clear terms the importance of providing a specifically adult

secondary program. Some of the characteristics of his proposed program which fall under the English teacher's concern are the learning of basic skills in depth, the development of communication skills, and a curriculum directed toward helping the student develop an understanding of man and his world.[22]

My personal belief, growing out of actual experience teaching adults, is that those characteristics are best achieved in a communication-centered program. Any course of study I suggest here will be of a general nature; not, I hope, too general to be useful, but broad enough to cover all the varied situations an adult English teacher might encounter. It is almost impossible in this study to break down the English program into grade levels because of the previously-mentioned difference of grade grouping in various systems. Therefore, the sequence adopted would have to be determined by individual groups of teachers. In the same way, I do not intend to deal with the component parts of an English program individually. The stress in most instances should probably be on basic skills, but because I believe in an integrated program of grammar, composition, literature, and speech, I will treat them as equal members of the English program.

One such communication-centered program that I think best fulfills the adult student's need was described by Jane Anne Settle in the *English Journal*. As part of the vocational education program in Jackson High School, Jackson, Georgia, boys studied English based on the three major theme units which I listed earlier. The object of the first unit, "English and Your Job," was to develop language skills of reading comprehension and oral and written communication for "on-the-job" use. Some of the activities employed were oral reports on students' own jobs, written descriptions of their jobs, discussion of current magazine and newspaper articles, study of application forms, written letters of application, dramatization of job interviews, individual and group reports on unions, Social Security and the like, and panel discussions.

In the second unit, "English and Your Responsibility as a Citizen," the emphasis was on reading, writing and discussing aspects of voting, military service, taxation, law enforcement, etc. During this unit vocabulary study was centered on abstractions such as "freedom" and "democracy." Propaganda approaches were studied, and the difference between fact and opinion was examined. The class participated in forums, panels, and informal debates.

The final unit, "English and Your Leisure," was designed to

[22] Hathaway, p. 239.

introduce the students to a variety of books, magazines, and newspapers, and to suggest some criteria for choice. Included in this unit also was material intended to lead toward more intelligent and enjoyable use of entertainment media.[23]

The activities listed above are good examples of the ways in which reading, writing, listening, and speaking can all be incorporated into the English class. The key to successful teaching of adults, perhaps of all ages, is variety. The bulletins published by NAPSAE, *A Treasury of Techniques for Teaching Adults* and *When You're Teaching Adults,* stress the importance of varying teaching methods. They recommend class projects, group discussions, round-table discussions, symposiums, role-playing, lectures, drill and practice, in fact, almost all commonly known methods of presenting material to a class. Included in the variety of methods should be an emphasis on small units so that the adult student may see some immediate gains. If such a structure as the Jackson, Georgia, program were followed, it would be a simple enough matter to break down the three major units into many smaller ones of one or two weeks' duration.

W. J. McKeachie states the need on a psychological basis for a variety of approaches in adult classes. He feels that for both attitudinal and higher cognitive outcomes a friendly, permissive teaching style is most effective with adult students. All of the students should be treated with respect, and praise should be used often but judiciously.[24]

These generalizations all seem to lead toward a great deal of student involvement in the class. Earlier I touched on the advisability of letting the adult class take part in actually deciding how much time should be spent on certain aspects of a unit. Most articles on adult classes emphasize the virtues of group discussions over lectures. The adult student is tired after a day's work and his attention may wander from even the most stimulating lecture. If a group discussion is to be effective, however, it must be planned and directed. In order for a student to be a useful participant, he must be prepared. Another excellent handbook supplied by NAPSAE is *How Adults Can Learn More — Faster,* in which chapters deal with taking notes, reading faster, using the library, etc. Every adult English student should be given a copy of this booklet, and the teacher could profitably spend a portion of the first class meeting drawing the main points to the attention of the students.

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[23] Settle, pp. 73-75.
[24] Kuhlen, p. 121.

The area basic to all learning skills in which many adult students are weak is reading. The adult teacher in all probability will not have a reading counselor to whom he can refer students with serious reading difficulties; however, he can turn to NAPSAE for some invaluable materials. The October and November, 1965, *Techniques* bulletins dealt with the problem of determining reading skills and grouping according to results. Both issues pointed out a fact the adult English teacher usually learns through painful experience, that it is inadvisable to begin an adult course with testing. Standardized tests during the first week of classes often cause great anxiety for the adult student, and most adult English programs do not really require a precise reading level. Several informal, individual reading tests are suggested, such as the Gray Oral Reading Test and the Botel Word Recognition Test.[25]

A fuller treatment of reading problems and their solution is found in the NAPSAE publication, *Teaching Reading to Adults.* This traces the reading program through the introductory, elementary, intermediate, and developmental stages. It also includes a fine section of appendixes containing addresses of publishers, film companies, test publishers, suppliers of special reading devices, and a listing of books for teachers, all relating to reading. The secondary English teacher may not consider himself primarily a teacher of reading, but it is essential when dealing with adult students that he know their reading abilities before he proceeds with his planned program.

If this program is an integrated one of literature, grammar, composition, and speech, the question of reading level plays an immediate part in determining choice of literary selections. Again from practical experience I find the use of paperbacks for adults preferable to the use of an anthology. Much material in anthologies prepared for adolescents is completely unsuitable for experienced adults, and the chronological approach found in most American and English literature anthologies is rather pointless for a study of literature designed to reveal man and his relation to his world. The use of paperbacks may encourage many adults who seldom buy books to consider building a home library. The paperback books available offer such a variety of themes that they can be quite helpful in accomplishing the aim advocated in the *English Journal* by Robert J. Graham to "provide *close reading* and *discussion experiences* related to the students' non-college bound

[25] These issues give addresses for the tests I have mentioned and others on p. 2.

world."[26] Many fine catalogs, such as R. P. Bowker's *Paperbound Books in Print* and *Paperbound Book Guide for High School,* are available to guide the teacher in selecting books. Other reading lists which can be helpful to the teacher in guiding his students' reading are *Books for You* (NCTE, 1964), *Patterns in Reading* (ALA, 1961), and *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (American Council on Education, 1963).

I would like to consider the elements of grammar and composition together because this is the manner in which I believe they can be most meaningful to the adult student. Once again, I would emphasize that the basic, practical skills of communication are the ones most needed by this group. Many of the writing activities mentioned in the Jackson, Georgia, program are typical of the ways in which writing can have practical meaning. I would not suggest that all writing be centered on letter and application forms, but the emphasis in expository and descriptive writing also should be on communicating an idea, impression, or belief to someone else.

Grammar presents many stumbling blocks to the former dropout adult student; in fact, he may think of English only as dull parts of speech and diagramming. The rapid advances currently being made with programmed materials appear to me to offer a solution to the adult English teacher. The less time spent in class as a group drilling on grammar rules the better. Programmed instruction can be done on an individual basis, with the student concentrating on his weakest areas, without holding the entire class back to his pace. An article in *Adult Education* states that the limited budget available to most adult programs would probably lead to the choice of programmed texts, rather than machines, and the authors mention that there were at the time of writing some 200 such texts available from 11 different publishers.[27] One other budgetary plus is that the cost of most programmed materials is covered by NDEA funds. One writer has pointed out that the special contribution programmed instruction can make to the culturally and economically deprived is to cause education to finally mean success, stimulation, and a desire to learn.[28]

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[26] Robert J. Graham, "The English Teacher: A Major Cause of School Drop-outs," *English Journal,* October, 1965, p. 631.

[27] Louis Van Phelan, Edward Harper, and William R. Hathaway, "Accelerating Able Adults Through Programmed Instruction," *Adult Education,* Spring, 1965, p. 164.

[28] Willard Abraham, "Programmed Instruction — It's Time for a Serious Look," *Arizona Teacher,* November, 1966, p. 6.

There is another benefit to be derived from programmed materials and that is an opportunity to accelerate the English program for some abler students. The student population in an adult class is so varied that it is not unheard-of to find some students in the group who are actually college-bound. These may be young women whose education was interrupted by early marriage and children or young men who have quit high school for military service or jobs. The program of one California adult school, as described in *Adult Education,* was specifically designed to accelerate the high school graduation program through the use of programmed texts. This entire class was of higher than average IQ, but the study has application for the teacher in a small school adult class, who is faced with both semi-literates and prospective college students.[29]

In connection with the programmed type of individualized study, certainly the English teacher should plan to encourage independent work among the students as much as possible. If time is allowed in class for free reading or research, an opportunity will be present for the teacher to confer individually with students about their particular problems, whether in writing or reading or verbal expression. The real value gained from any adult program should not be acquisition of a diploma, but acquisition of the desire to continue learning.

The only remaining element of the integrated program is speech, and these activities are probably best handled through the group discussions, reading aloud, and giving oral reports. The adult student may be extremely sensitive about speaking before others, but he should be acquainted with the reason why such experience is important. The English teacher is not attempting to develop professional public speakers, but citizens who can function well in situations requiring spoken English, citizens who can say what they *really* mean and can understand what has *really* been said to them. Although much has been written about speech training on the secondary level, two references which would be especially useful to the adult teacher, because of their correlation with the English program, are Chapter 14 in J. N. Hook's book, *The Teaching of High School English* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1965), and Chapter 25 by Ruth E. French in *An English Teacher's Reader* (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1962).

There are two basic practical problems usually facing the English teacher of adults: the lack of proper materials and the un-

[29] Van Phelan, pp. 164-166.

availability of library facilities. The first may be more easily solved than the second. Many adult teachers are stuck with the texts they are handed because they never ask for anything else. Money is quite often a restricted commodity in adult schools, but quantities of varied and helpful free instructional materials *are* available to the teacher who seeks them out. The NCTE has a pamphlet of "More Sources of Free and Inexpensive Material," compiled by John R. Searles. Chapter 10 of *The High School Curriculum* deals with "Types and Sources of Instructional Materials" and lists bibliographies of free and inexpensive materials, such as the *Educators Index to Free Materials* and *Vertical File Index*.[80]

With the matter of library accessibility, the adult teacher may feel frustrated, especially if his class meets at night. Some librarians, however, are aware of the special needs of adult schools. Josephine Kunkle lists the many advantages to having a special adult school librarian,[81] but most English teachers will find this is an ideal much to be longed for, and will realistically make arrangements with the regular day school librarian to have the library open for special prearranged sessions. This is one area in which I think the day school English department might be able to play a part, as I shall explain later.

The vast areas of organization, curriculum, and materials covered all too briefly in this section may only prove confusing, rather than helpful, to the first-time teacher of English to adults. As I stated previously, the adult English teacher must draw heavily on his own resources, but if he is conscientious, energetic, and enthusiastic these resources are plenty. The standard professional publications in English (*English Journal* and *College English*) will provide him with many ideas which can be experimented with in his classes. A text such as *The Teaching of High School English* with its "Idea Box" following each chapter affords countless techniques which are adaptable to the adult student. Finally, the adult education professional publications, while only occasionally dealing with specific subject areas, do serve to remind the English teacher of the very special problems and needs of his students and to suggest methods for meeting those needs and for solving those problems.

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[80] Bob G. Woods, "Type and Sources of Instructional Materials," *The High School Curriculum,* ed. Harl R. Douglass (New York, 1964), pp. 205-206.

[81] Josephine Kunkle, "School Libraries and the Adult Student," *Adult Leadership,* December, 1966, pp. 197-198+.

V.

The teacher of adults is very rapidly made aware of the need for an in-depth study of the teaching of English on the adult level. The primary suggestion I would make is that a survey should be conducted concerning how English is currently being taught to adults, and then materials (pamphlets, monographs, or the like) dealing specifically with English instruction on this level should be prepared for the use of adult teachers. The NCTE is the obvious choice for undertaking such a project.

My other suggestions are related to some ways in which the regular high school English department can be of help. In at least three of the four problem areas I discussed in Part II there are specific ways in which the English department could cooperate. Those problems were the unavailability of proper materials, the status of the program, the training of teachers, and the fulfillment of the students' needs. It seems to me that there is little of a direct nature the English department can do about the last-named problem, but, in an indirect way, help in the other areas will contribute to meeting students' needs.

The English department can not make publishers produce proper materials for adults, but many English departments are well-equipped with a variety of texts and other instructional materials to which the adult teacher does not have access. Often great quantities of paperback books and unused workbooks are stacked in an English department office. If the adult teacher were given as free access to instructional materials as any other member of the English department, he could probably adapt much secondary material to his students' needs.

Many adult teachers can not use any audio-visual aids. The department chairman would be a likely person to exert influence so that such necessary aids to teaching would be readily available to all teachers of English, regardless of the time of day (or night) during which the class meets. Even such an obvious aid as meeting the night class in an English room (complete with dictionaries and partial room library) is often overlooked in assigning night classes. The cooperation of a department chairman in seeing that such rooms are available is invaluable. In the same category would come the chairman's assistance in convincing the school librarian of the real need of library facilities for all English students, day and night.

The problem of the status of the adult English program requires attitudinal changes on the part of the regular English department. Probably none of the above suggestions could be put

into practice unless the English department thought of the adult school as part of the total English program. If this feeling is attained, then the chairman will probably be willing to fight for the rights of "his" English teachers to use the library, audio-visual aids, rooms, and instructional materials. The superintendent of the adult school would appear to be the person to launch such a feeling of unity; however, the English department chairman might be surprised at the warm welcome he would receive if he initiated the cooperation.

It is in dealing with the problem of teacher training that I think the English department can be most helpful. Many adult English teachers have fallen behind in keeping up with recent trends in the teaching of English. If they are housewives or retired teachers, it may have been several years since they have read a professional journal or taken a course themselves. They are apt to teach using the most traditional methods, which may have helped to drive their pupils out of school the first time. The regular English department may not be too aware of the adult student's needs, but if the department has any in-service training program at all, the adult teachers should certainly be included. It is unlikely that a teacher will attend a session on transformational grammar or on approaches to literature and return to the classroom presenting the material in the same way. If adult education is a re-learning process for the students, it definitely must be for the teachers, also, and participation in the English department's in-service training program could give the adult teacher new insights into his subject.

If the suggestions made above were all, or even partially, implemented, they would help tremendously to solve the ultimate problem of meeting the students' needs. The attitude toward these students and their education ought to be that which was behind the response made to a questionnaire on public school adult programs. One school administrator in Wyoming replied: "Our facilities are bought by the community; they should be thus used. Education is not for grades 1 through 12, but for ages 1 through life."[32]

[32] *Urban Public School Adult Education Programs of the United States* (Washington, 1952), p. 113.

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